



For Immediate Release
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First New Woodrow Wilson Bridge is Dedicated First Vehicles to Cross New Wilson Bridge in Mid June

On the New Woodrow Wilson Bridge – At a star-spangled ceremony attended by more than 1,400 dignitaries and guests, the first new Woodrow Wilson Bridge was dedicated.

The centerpiece of the day was a "Uniting the States" handshake at the mid-point of the new bridge, following the dramatic closure of the bridge's massive 150-foot draw span leaves, thereby physically linking Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. Participating in the handshake were U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine and District Mayor Anthony A. Williams. The first ceremonial vehicle to cross the new bridge was President Woodrow Wilson's own 1923 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost (courtesy of the Woodrow Wilson House).

The keynote speakers stated:

"This project is about much more than replacing worn concrete and steel that carries at least \$100 billion of America's gross domestic product each year," said Secretary Mineta. "It is a reminder that our highways give people the freedom to travel, the opportunity to earn a living and the chance to come closer together."

"I am proud of Maryland's management role in keeping this mega project on-time and on-budget," said Governor Ehrlich. "Opening the first Woodrow Wilson Bridge span is a crucial first step to breaking one of the East Coast's greatest bottlenecks. The Woodrow Wilson Bridge, just like the Intercounty Connector, will be key to unclogging our transportation network, opening up economic opportunities and creating jobs throughout the Capital region."

"This bridge will not bring an end to the metro area's traffic problems. But it will make a difference," said Governor Tim Kaine. "In the short term, it will help thousands of families get back and forth to work. In the long term, it is a reminder of the progress we can make when Virginia, Maryland and Washington D.C. come together and focus on the people we serve."

"Other than the city of Washington, DC itself, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge is the critical link bringing together Maryland and Virginia," said Mayor Williams. "The bridge is a symbol of the region's cooperative efforts, and today's ceremony is a tangible demonstration of that collegial spirit. If this means fewer traffic tie-ups, that's good for all of us."

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One of the nation's largest public works, the \$2.4 billion Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project also is demonstrating that mega-projects can be managed in an on-schedule, on budget manner while protecting the natural environment and neighboring communities.

The bridge dedication signaled a new dawn for congestion-weary commuters and interstate travelers: The beginning of the end of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge corridor's notorious traffic congestion. In addition to serving as a major local commuting route, the Wilson Bridge is the mid-point of Interstate 95, the east coast's busiest highway. An estimated \$100 million of commerce crosses the bridge every year. Yet gridlock at the bridge burdens travelers with a conservatively estimated \$125 million in annual delay costs.

The Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project is jointly sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Maryland State Highway Administration and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation.

The new bridge will continue to carry the name of the 28th President, who in many ways ushered in the modern American presidency. The original bridge was named in 1956 as part of the centennial of President Wilson's birth, which was five years before the bridge was completed. December 28, 2006 will mark the 150th anniversary of his birth. A number of President Wilson's descendants attended the dedication ceremony.

Traffic will move onto the new bridge a few weeks after the dedication. The interim period is needed to allow bridge contractors to make final preparations. The traffic switch will involve two weekends of very severe traffic impacts, during which the public is urged to steer clear of the area. The traffic switches will occur as follows:

- **“Stay Away” Weekend #1 – Outer Loop** Traffic Transfer
When: Friday, June 9 at 8:00 p.m. to as late as Monday, June 12 at 5:00 a.m.
What: **Outer Loop of the Beltway/I-95 North** reduced to a single lane for up to four miles. Several ramps on both sides of the river will be closed and detoured.
- **“Stay Away” Weekend #2 – Inner Loop** Traffic Transfer
When: Friday, July 14 at 8:00 p.m. to as late as Monday, July 17 at 5:00 a.m.
What: **Inner Loop of the Beltway/I-95 South** reduced to a single lane for up to four miles. Several ramps on both sides of the river will be closed and detoured.

Overall, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project is more than 53 percent complete. The second new bridge is scheduled to open in the summer of 2008. Also that year, the revamped I-295 and MD 210 interchanges will be completed. The new US Route 1 interchange will be finished in 2009, followed by the Telegraph Road interchange in 2011.